

FASTR is slowing down

Every year, the U.S. government funds billions of dollars in research being conducted in various government agencies and departments. U.S. taxpayers underwrite this research, and they have a right to expect access to the resulting published data, analyses, and articles. Currently, the taxpayers who cannot afford to pay for access are unable to use this material in a timely manner. For nearly a decade librarians have been at the forefront of efforts to make the research the public pays for accessible by advocating for passage of the Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act of 2015 (FASTR).

Unfortunately, what seems like an obvious improvement to the public's access to taxpayer-funded research, this bipartisan, bicameral bill will disappear at the close of the 114th Congress on January 3, 2017.

ALA has spent the past year advocating for FASTR because it would:

- Require federal agencies and departments with an annual extramural research budget of \$100 million or more to mandate that all taxpayer-funded researchers provide the agency with an electronic copy of the final manuscript of any paper accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Currently, the federal policy only applies to the National Institutes of Health Public Access. FASTR would extend this stipulation to 11 additional federal agencies and departments.
- Ensure that all submitted manuscripts are preserved in a stable digital repository maintained by the funding agency or in another suitable repository that permits free public access, interoperability, and long-term preservation.
- Require that each taxpayer-funded manuscript be made available to the public, online and without cost, between six-to-twelve months after the article has been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

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FASTR is not only about giving the public timely access to the costly research the U.S. government funds. It is also about getting maximal benefit from the results of that research. Broad communication of research findings is an essential component of taxpayers' investment. The Internet is the most efficient way to share the latest scientific and research advances with every scientist, physician, educator, and individual who wants this valuable information, and yet much of it is locked behind expensive pay walls. Faster and wider sharing of knowledge fuels the advance of science and innovation.

Even though FASTR seems to be slowing down, political will to make information more accessible is picking up. For the first time since bills fighting for open access to taxpayer-funded research were introduced, FASTR unanimously passed out of the Senate's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. While this may not appear to be much movement at all, it demonstrates an increasing openness to make information accessible. We do not expect to win this battle before January 3, but little by little, Congress by Congress, timely access to taxpayer-funded research is becoming more attainable. The fight will continue in the 115th Congress. *ZZ*

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